

Preliminary Ownership History of the
Allen E. Roberts and Herman F. Roberts Barns

Located on the Janice Roberts and Harold Ledford Properties, Respectively
(South) Marshall Township
Madison County, NC

Despite the different property owners, the Allen E. Roberts barn and the Herman F. Roberts barn are best discussed together given their common family histories and their close proximity (500' apart) to one another. Both properties are located on Allen Drive, just south of the intersection with Roberts Branch Road in the South Marshall Township of Madison County. Both barns are examples of log cabins converted to barns in the early 1950's. The construction dates of the original log cabins are not documented, though Roberts family oral history suggests the Allen E. Roberts barn (located to the south, just west of Allen Dr.) was originally built in 1819. The other structure is likely of similar age. In the early 1800's this area was owned by Mark Mitchell and Thomas Davidson after a 50,000-acre land grant issued by the state in 1795. This tract was purchased by J.J. Gudger in 1843. The earliest record of a Roberts family purchase in this area was in 1851.

Focusing first on the Herman Roberts barn, currently owned by Harold Ledford, this structure currently sits on a 110-acre tract located just east of Allen Drive. In 2007 Ledford acquired this tract from Geneva Cole (nee Ledford), the deed referring to four earlier deeds for the property descriptions. These four deeds, dated from 1918 until 1942, were all deeds issued to Allen E. Roberts from his parents, J.B. and Alice Roberts. Since the 2007 deed refers directly to these four older deeds, it can only be assumed that Geneva Cole was a descendant and acquired this land through her family survivorship. The relationship between Geneva Ledford Cole and Allen E. Roberts or with the current property owner, Harold Ledford, was not determined though it was noted that Allen Roberts' aunt, Mary J. Roberts married a Ledford in the late 1800s. The combined tract of land described in the four deeds can be further traced back to 1884 when J.B. Roberts acquired almost 200 acres from his father, James H. Roberts. The original acquisition by James Roberts could not be pinpointed, but only one deed was located covering a 200-acre tract with James Roberts listed as a grantees, that being from 1851. As previously mentioned, this is the earliest Roberts deed, in this area, that was found in the records, including a search of Buncombe County deeds.

The Allen E. Roberts barn is located south of the Herman Roberts barn, separated by a property line that historically followed what is now Allen Drive. The current

owner, Janice Roberts, acquired the 51-acre tract from her mother, Elizabeth Payne Roberts (married to Allen H. Roberts, brother of Herman, the namesake of the other barn), in 2011. This next earliest deed covering this same tract was from 1945, when the tract was conveyed to Allen E. Roberts (Janice's grandfather), again from his parents J.B. and Alice Roberts. By this time (1945), Allen E. Roberts owned at least 150 acres, straddling what is now Allen Drive, and would have included both log cabins. If the cabins were converted in the 1950s, it seems clear that Allen E. Roberts, then in his 60s, would have been responsible.